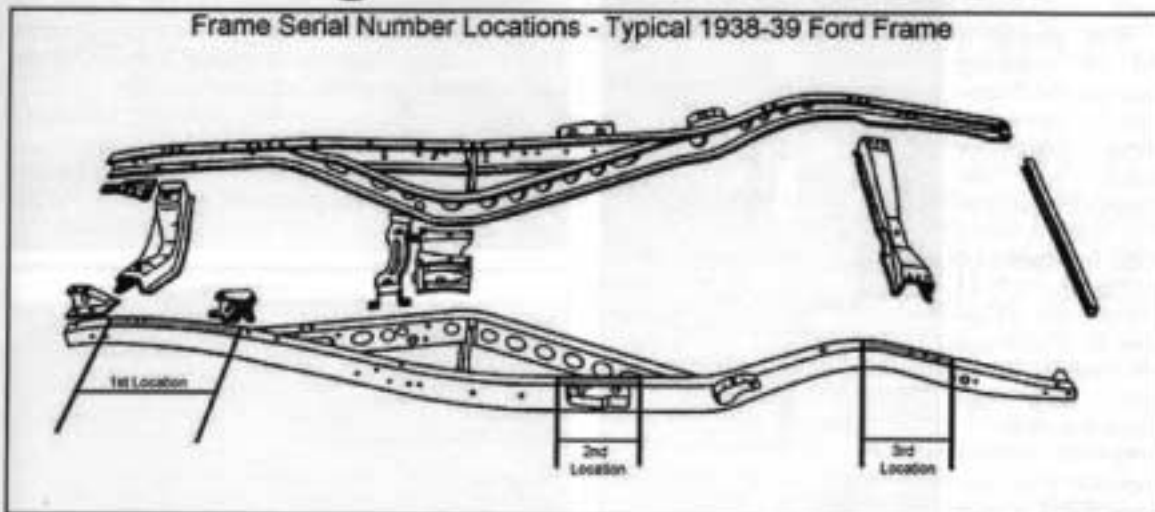


# Finding Your Serial Number

Frame Serial Number Locations - Typical 1938-39 Ford Frame



by Mac VanPelt

One of the most common questions asked by members of their Advisor is, "Where can I find the serial/frame number on my car?" Many old-timers can easily answer that question. However, it still perplexes many a member seeking that number for registration purposes.

Recently, I ran across an excellent explanation on a website\*, including photos, of the 1932-48 V-8s as well as into the early 1950s. — Editor

\*[http://www.vanpeltssales.com/FH\\_web/flathead\\_home.htm](http://www.vanpeltssales.com/FH_web/flathead_home.htm)

**F**rom 1932 through 1948 Ford Motor Company stamped the serial number into the top of the driver's side frame rail in three locations. This same number was also stamped into the top of the transmission-to-engine housing portion of the transmission. This location was visible when the floorboard and transmission cover plate were removed.



1932 serial number stamped on flat area on bell housing of transmission.

Of the frame-stamped serial numbers, only the forward-most stamping was visible when looking down into the engine compartment (located between the front crossmember and the dash (firewall)).

The two other frame locations are visible only when the body is removed from the frame. The serial numbers were metal stamped with numbers/letters approximately 1/4" in height. The

number (including the prefixes shown) was always preceded by (and followed by) a stamped "star" similar to an asterisk.

It is believed that this was done to prevent someone from fraudulently adding a digit to the beginning or ending of a serial number in order to alter its identification. The "font" of the stamp had an unusual looking number "6" which looked more like an upside down "9" (the vertical stroke of the number was quite straight, not curved).

## 1932-1948 Number Locations

Most people are familiar with the usual location of the VIN or Vehicle Identification Number on the older Fords. Beside the matching number that was stamped into the transmission upper housing near the bell housing, Ford stamped the same number into the frame rail at three locations. The number is preceded by a stamped star



Figure 1

The most visible frame number can be found on the exposed driver's side frame rail between the front crossmember and/or on the rail just above the steering box next to the firewall.

and a star follows the last number as well.

I've placed a bit of masking tape on the frame rail to show the three locations used. All are stamped into the left side (driver's side for those of us in the USA) frame rail. (*Figure 1*) The front placement is in line with the cross-member with the engine mounts. I've also seen Ford stamp the number rearward several inches from this spot. This number should always be visible when looking down into the engine compartment. The numbers are often not stamped very deeply, and



*Figure 2*  
Second frame number location, covered by the body, located toward the rear of the front door.



*Figure 3A*  
Third location, again hidden by the body, is at the rear crossmember, sometimes on the crossmember itself.



*Figure 3B*

may be filled with paint and dirt and, of course, rust!

The second location (*Figure 2*), is at the body-

to-frame mounting pad (toward the rear of the front door area).

The third location (*Figure 3A-3B*), is atop the same rail, at the rear spring mount crossmember. These pictures show this location. I removed the tape to show the actual stamped number.

When the frame was dirty and rusty I couldn't see the stampings, but the acid dip of the frame cleaned it all up. The locations at the middle and rear of the frame are normally covered up by the body and not visible until the body comes off.



*Figure 4*  
Serial number stamped on 1939 transmission bellhousing.

## 1949-1953 Number Locations



*Figure 4*  
1949-1950 Serial Number on firewall data plate. Stamped numbers are the "cowl code."

On 1949 and 1950 cars the number was stamped on the data plate (firewall) under the hood. The "Cowl Code" was stamped on the firewall. (*Figure 4*)

Serial numbers were stamped on the data plate located on the firewall and on top of the right hand reinforcement (side member to No 1 cross member); or on top of the right hand side member, where visible when the hood is raised.

Contained in the serial number is the Engine Type, Model Year, Plant which assembled the car (1950/51 only) and Numerical Sequence of

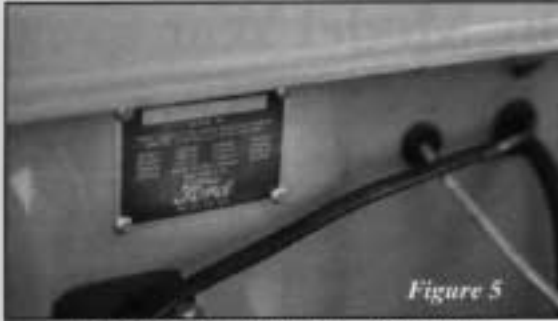


Figure 5  
1951 Serial Number on firewall data plate.



Figure 6  
1951 Serial number on data plate. Stamped letters and numbers are the "Cowl code."



Figure 7 - 1952 data plate located on passenger door.



Figure 8 - 1953 data plate located on driver's door:

assembly. The engine type was designated as "B" for the eight cylinder engine, "W" for the six cylinder engine, and "P" for the 110 HP Police engine. The model year was designated by "9" for 1949/0" for 1950 and "I" for 1951.

In 1951, the number was stamped in a plate which was mounted on the dash panel (firewall)

under the hood, (Figure 5 and 6)

For 1952 models the number was on a plate mounted on the right front door pillar post.

The late '52 (after August) and the '53 models had the number on a plate on the left front door pillar post. (Figure 7 & 8)

**Resources:** The information given in this chart is based on the data given in MOTOR'S AUTO REPAIR MANUAL. Four versions were referenced: the 1935 to '48 book and the 1946 to '56 book. Also, "The 1938-39 FORD BOOK" published by the Early Ford V-8 Club of America. And, "The STANDARD CATALOG OF FORD 1903-2003" published by Krause Publications. We have found some conflicting information on serial numbers (surprised?) but have generally used the data from the Early Ford V-8 CLUB ALBUM when statistics from other sources was different.

**Caveat!** In reviewing the various sources of serial number information (and we have not even researched them all) we find there are some discrepancies. Sometimes the Ford record keeping was not entirely correct. Some serial numbers within a sequence were simply never assigned to a vehicle. Other details that don't make sense prevent us from assuming 100% reliability in these statistics. As confirmed details become available to us, we will add reference notes or make corrections as necessary.

For a great source of Flathead V-8 information, visit Mac VanPelt's website. Be sure to check out progress photos of his 1939 Ford, which includes information reprinted here in serial number locations. - Editor

**Website:**

[http://www.vanpeltsales.com/FH\\_web/flathead\\_home.htm](http://www.vanpeltsales.com/FH_web/flathead_home.htm)